(b) whether it is a fact that personnel at the subordinate levels are not given service conditions, facilities and allowances similar to their equivalent in armed forces;

(c) whether Government has received demands from the staff and the employees seeking similar service conditions, facilities and allowance;

(d) whether Government is considering to give service conditions, facilities and allowances to junior officers and subordinate staff of BRO similar to their equivalent in armed forces; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) Border Roads Organization (BRO) was raised in 1960 for economic and strategic development of North and North Eastern border areas of the country. It is maintained by the Government of India to meet the operational requirements of the Army. BRO comprises of General Reserve Engineering Force (GREF) employees directly recruited, deputed from Central/State Government Departments and personnel from the Armed Forces on Extra Regimental Employment (ERE) of Army Officers. The Director General Border Roads (DGBR) is the head of BRO who exercises adminisitrative, financial and technical powers.

(b) As per existing regulations, services officers and personnel are governed by the terms and conditions of service applicable to them in Defence Services while GREF personnel are governed by Civil Service Regulations. However, some benefits as available to Defence Personnel, like Siachen Allowance, High Altitude Allowance, Ration, CSD canteen facilities, concession in air/rail fare, free uniform/uniform allowance, free accommodation etc. are also extended to GREF personnel.

(c) All matters pertaining to service conditions of GREF personnel of BRO including demands relating to service conditions, facilities and allowances are duly considered as and when any such demand is received.

(d) and (e) GREF personnel are governed by Central Civil Service Regulations and their pay and allowances are regulated according to the rules. As already mentioned in reply to Part (b), certain additional benefits as available to Army personnel are also given to GREF personnel.

Preparations for making Indian soldiers hi-tech

†881. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any preparations are being made to hi-tech Indian soldiers;

(b) if so, the efforts being made in this regard; and

(c) the time-frame fixed by DRDO to achieve this target?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) has evolved the preliminary report on "Soldier as a System" and is in the process of discussion with the Army, as a collaborative programme.

(d) It may take about four years time after the project is santioned.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.